

St. Peter's Church  
New Kent County, Virginia

HABS No. VA-127

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Major Eugene Bradbury, District Officer, A.I.A.  
210 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia

ST. PETER'S CHURCH  
New Kent County, Virginia

Owner: Trustees of St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Date of Erection: Church, 1701 - 1703; Tower about 1740.

Architect: Will Hughes

Builder: Vestry with several contractors

Present Condition: This building, generally, is in a good state of preservation. The original structure was a plain rectangular building and from existing indications the gables are believed to have had brick parapet walls with a brick coping. The tower at the west end was added at a later date and it is believed that sometime after this was built the gabled parapets were removed and the roof extended over the walls. Certain changes have been made in the openings, the large opening at east end having been bricked up, as also a space on the south wall which suggests a chimney and a door at different periods. A large portion of the wall on the north side has been rebuilt. A brick wall ordered to be built around the church yard in 1719 has been entirely removed. None of the original interior remains.

Number of Stories: One story with two story tower

Materials of Construction: Walls are brick. Those of the original rectangular church being built with a very large brick laid English bond, alternate courses of headers and stretchers. The walls of the tower are built with a different, smaller brick laid Flemish bond with glazed headers. The present roofs are covered with slate with wood cornices. Cement finials have been placed at the four upper corners of the tower. The ground floor of the tower is paved with brick and the ceiling and interior walls of arches down to spring line, and the wall of the church down to the water table are plastered and all whitewashed including the jambs and soffits of arches. The floor of the church has a late wood floor. Interior walls and ceilings are plastered.

Other Existing Records: The following extracts were taken from the Manuscript Vestry Book of St. Peter's Parish, New Kent County, Virginia:

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"For St. Peter's parish, Nek Kent County. At a vestry held at the house of Mr. James Moe 13th August, 1700.

"Present: Mr. James Bowker, minister. Capt. Joseph Forster, Mr. Thomas Smith, Mr. Gideon Macon, Capt. John Lyddall, Mr. John Lewis, Mr. David Craford, Mr. James Moss, Capt. Nicho. Merewether, Mr. John Park, Vestrymen. Mr. Hene. Wyatt, Mr. Wm. Baeett, Church wardene.

"Whereas the Lower Church of this parish is very much out of Repair and Standeth very inconvenient for most of the inhabitants of the said parieh. Therefore ordered that as soon as conveniently may be a new Church of Brick Sixty feet long and twenty fower feet wide in the Cleer and fourteen feet pitch with a Gallery Sixteen feet Long be built and Erected upon the maine Road by the School House near Thomas Jackson's; and the Clark is ordered to give a Copy of of This order to Capt. Nicho. Merewether who is Requested to show the same to Will Hughes and deaire him to draw a Draft of the said Church and to bee at the next vestry and Mr. Gideon Macon and Mr. Thomas Smith are Requested to treat with and buy an acre of Land of Thomas Jackson whereson to build the said Church and for a Church yard.

"New Kent County. At a vestry held for St. Peter's parieh at the house of Mr. James Moss the 26 September, 1700.

"This preent vestry having taken into their Consideration the order of his Excellence and Councill baring date at James City the 10th July, 1700, together with an order of this County Court baring date the 28th August, 1700, this day Layd before them Concerning the Returning an acct. of the number of Tythables in this parish, together with the bounds and Limits of the Same in order to be Layd before the next Generall Assembly and the same being juet at hand, and whereas this present vestry having Designed to build a Brick Church out of hand they have therefore thought good to Refer the laying of the Parish Levy for this present year and all other proceedings about the building the aforesaid Church till after the Landing the Seesions of the next Gen'l Assembly, and all Persons that are Decirous to undertake any part of the said work Relating to the Building of the said Church ehall have notice given of the time and place where the next vestry shall be held when they will then and there be Recorded."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's parish at the house of Mr. John Lewis, 14 Febe., 1700-1.

"Thomae Jackson having appeared at this present vestry hath agreed toe and with the said vestry to make one hundred thousand

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good and well burnt brick fit for building each and Every brick to be moulded in a Shod mould of 9 inches  $\frac{3}{4}$  in length and  $4\frac{3}{4}$  in width and 4 inches  $\frac{1}{2}$  thick in the Cleer all the aforesaid bricks to be layd down or delivered upon the Ground where the Church is to be built and in consideration of the said work this vestry doe promise and agree to pay the said Jackson ten thousand pounds of Legall sweet-sented tobacco and Cask Conv't in this parish this present year, 1701, and teen thousand pounds of Like qualified tobacco as afores'd and Cask Conv't. in this parish in the year 1702."

"David Craford, Nicholas Merewether and Wm. Bassett absent whereas at a vestry held for this parish at the House of Mr. James Moss the 13th Aug't, 1700, it was ordered and agreed that as soon as Conveniently could be made a new Church of Brick 60 fset Long 24 fset wide and 14 feet pitch in the Cleer with a Gallerey 16 fset long Should be built and Erected upon the main Roads by the School house neer Thomas Jackson's and for ths performance and forwarding the said work according to the aforesaid order this vestry do Request and appoint Jo'n Lswis and Cideon Macon, Gent'n Supervisers and Directors of the said work to agres with and toe any workmen that shall offer thmselves to undertake any part of the S'd work that hath not been allwady agreed with and for what ever the Superavisers doe agres for in Tobacco and Cask Conv't this vestry dos promiss to performe and abids by and make punctuall payment of ths Same and that the Collector make noe payment to any workman but upon a note sign'd by the S'd Superviasere and the Superviasers are Requested to take bond with Good Securities of all workmen that have or ehall undertake any part of the S'd work for due performance of the same, and that all bonds be taken paialbe to the Superavisers and Directors for the use of the parish and that the Superavisere give bond in behalfe of the parish to all workmen for due payment of the ir tobacco according to agreement.

"William Hughes, Carpenter, hath this day agreed toe and with this vestry to doe and performe all the Carpenters, Joyners and hewers work of a Church to be built neer the housse of Thomas Jackson and according to the Severall Drafts this day Subscribed by the said Hughes and to performe all the said work Compleated and workman Like of Length, breadth and pitch according to an order of vestry dated the 13th Aug't, 1700, and in Consideration of the s'd work this vestry are to pay the S'd Hughes twenty-five thousand pounds of sweet sented tobacco and Cash Convenisnt in this parish that is to say one halfe at the \* all after ths Raising and Covering the said Church and the other halfe at the Compleate finishing the said work and when the whole work is finished if it be done to the

Liking of the major part of the said vestry then this vestry doe promise to pay him, the Said Hughes, one thousand pounds of Sweet sented Tobacco and Cask Conv't over and above the aforesaid mencioned \*\*\* and further the said Hughes doeth promise to Enter into bond with Good Securities when Required."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's parrish at the House of Capt. nicho merewether the 4th June, 1701.

"It is ordered by this present vestry that the Church wardens from time to time provide all such nailes and other necessarys as are necessary and Conven't for Carrying on the building of a brick Church in this parieh and that they hire some man to see the oyster Shoals measured and giva a Receipt to the Sloop-man for the same."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's Parish at the house of Mr. John Park the 22 October, 1701.

"It is ordered by this present vestry that the Church wardens provide Three sufficient Laborers to attend the bricklayer or bricklayere in building a brick Church upon a acre of Land bought of Thomas Jackson upon Stone Swamp neer the said Jackson's house, and that they be ready some time in the month of March, and that they take Care the said Laborers have Sufficient Dyet, washing and Lodging for 6 months, and eoe proportionable for a Longer or a Shorter time bein' for the Said wages and Dyet."

"It is ordered that Thomae Sneade's bill of 500 lbe. of tobacco and Cask Lye in the hande of Mr. William Baaett, Church warden, and by him to be desposed of for naile for and towards the building the Church and to returne an acc't to the next vestry.

"Mr. Hen'r wyatt hath this day agreed toe and with this present vestry to get 20000 Good Sound Sipres Shingles for Covering for the brick Church Each and every Shingle to be 18 inches in Length, and none to be more than 5 inches in breadth, or none over than 3 inches, and not to be Laes than  $\frac{1}{8}$  an inch or more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick, and all to be well rounded and bundled up fit to be Layed into a Cart by the 10th Septemb'r next, and Delivered on this Side Chickahomana Swamp, where a Cart may Conveniently Come to take them up in the neck below and adjacent to the Land where Richard Scrugs now Lives with in the County of New Kent, and that he be payed for the same two thousand pounds of tobacco and Cask Conven't.

"Convenient at the Laying the next Levy. Likewise the said Mr. Henry Wyatt doth further agrae with this vestry to send for England in this present Shipping for Ironwork, Glass for Saeh windows, and paint for the aforesaid Church according as

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the Carpenter shall Give Directions, and to be allowed 45 lbs. p Cent. from the Superaviser's notes \* in tobacco and Cask. Convenient at the middle markuit price, and that Mr. Wyatt take his Directions for Sending for the aforesaid Goods from Mr. William Hughes, the Carpenter, who is to build the said Church."

"At a Vestry held for St. Peter's parish at the House of Capt. Joseph Forster on the 4 March 1701.

"Ordered that the Church wardens forthwith Send to Thomas Becket and Zackery Ellis or any other Bricklayers to Come and view the Bricke made by Thomas Jackson for the building a brick Church in this parish whither they are good and well burnt, fitt for building and that the viewers make Report thereof, and that the Church wardens pay them for their Trouble."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's parish at the House of Mr. Hene. Wyatt, the 6 Aprill, 1702.

"Whereas, there is a great Church of Brick a building in this parish, and the Churchwardens Liveing somewhat remote from the said building, therefore, Capt. John Forster and Capt. John Lyddall with the Churchwardens as Superavisers from time to time to give their direction and assistance for Carrying on the Said work."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's Parish at the house of Mr. James Mose the 27th day of febe', 1702-3.

"James Knott, plasterer, doeth and hath this day agreed with this vestry to drive and naile on the Lathee and doe all the Lathing plastering and painting work that is to be done in, on or about a Brick Church now built in this parish, and to doe and performe all the said worke Compleated and workman-like and to Enter upon the work with in a forth night and not to doe any other worke till it be Compleated and finished, and in Consideration of the Said worke this vestry doe promise to pay the Said James Knott foure thousand five hundred pounds of Tobacco and Cask Convenient at the Laying of the next Levy, and the said Knott to find him help to send him and Enter into bond to the Church wardens for the performance of the same."

"Cornelius Hall doeth this day agree to and with this vestry to doe and performe all the underpinning brick worke according to the direction of Wm. Hughes, Carpenter, that is to be done in the Brick Church now built in this parish, and to be paid foure hundred pounds of Tobacco and Cask Convenient for the same at Laying of the next Levy."

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"Thomas Jackson hath this day agrsed with this vestry to find lumber sufficisnt for Lathes, Sand and wood to hurn the Lime and bring the Sems in place and to find sufficient helpe, to send the plasterer during ths plastering the Brick Church and to give his assistanoe to Cornelius Hall while he is undsrpining the place for the pews and Communion tehle, and to be paid for the sams five thousand pounda of Tobacco and Cask Convenient at Laying the next Levy, and the Clerke is ordered to take his bond payable to the Church wardens for the performance of the same."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's parish et the Brick Church the 13 July, 1703.

"Mr. Richard Littlepage is Requested and accordingly joynsd with Cept. Joseph Forstr to bs Superaviser of the worke to be done about the Brick Church in the place of Capt. John Lyddall, Late dec't."

"Cornelius Hall, Bricklayer, hath this day agreed with this vestry to hrick the IIs of the Brick Church from dore to dore Compleated and workman like and to be paid for the same seven hundred pounds of Tobacco and Cask Conv't at Laying the next Levy, and that he find all Laborers to doe the said worke and doe the said worke when Ever the Supervisors shall call for the same."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's Parish at the Brick Church ye 27th Octo'r, 1703.

"It is ordered that Coll'r Joseph Forster and Capt Richard Littlepage be Supervisers of the Brick Church and maj'r nicholes merriwether and Mr. Hene. Childs be superavisers of the Chappell upon mechumps Creeke, and that the Collector make noe payment of any Tobacco Levyd to them p their order."

"At a Vsstry held for St. Peters's Parish et the House of James Taylor, November ys 18th, 1719.

"Whereas There is a Brick wall to be Built about the Brick Church, whose Dimentions are as followeth, Viz.: One hundred feet square, To be fourtsen Inches thick, four feet & a half above Ground, And four fset and half high in the Lowest Place, all Levell, And the Bricks Laid upon a Good foundation with a handsom Coopin Brick upon the Top And Gentsely Rompt at each side of the Gates. The Bricks to be according to the statute something Less than Nine Inches in Length, two Wide Handsom Gates made after the form of Iron Getes with Handsom Square Peares (or Posts) for the Gates, with a hollow Spire,

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a Top and Good Hinges for the two Gates, with Hasps, Bolts and Locks as Good as can be got and in fashion, and to allow 16 bushels of Lime to a Thousand Bricks. The s'd wall to be in all Respects as well Done as the Capitol wall in Williamsburgh. And the Church to be repaired with Shinglee wherever there is any wanting. And to Lay two Course of Shingles on each side to enclose the Rough. And to make a pair of New Doors and Door Casee at the West End of the Church.

"Jamee Skilton appeared at this Vestry and Agreed with the s'd Vestry to Build the within mentioned Brick wall according to the within Dementions. And to Do the other work mentioned in Repairing the Church, &c., for which Brick woll & other work The Vestry Doe agree to pay unto ye s'd James Skelton at the next fall Twenty Six Thousand pounds of Sweet Soented Tobacco, and Caek, Provided the s'd James Skilton Enter into Bond with Security with the Church warden for the true Performance of the above agreement & that the S'd Brick Wall and other work may be finished by the Last day of August next.

"Whereas, Madam Francis Littlepage hath out of her Generous Inclination offered to this Parish a Bell, Wee the s'd Vestry, in behalf of ye Parish Doe Desire the Reverend Mr. William Brodie to Return her Thanks for her kind and Generous offer."

"At a Vestry held at Major Scott's on Friday the 26th of Jan'y, 1721-2.

"Ordered that there be Notice given that there will be a Vestry on Thursday ye 15th of Feb'ry, 1721-2, at the Brick Church where those persons that are willing to Undertake to build a Substantial Bellfry at the West End of the Church are desired to appear and make their proposals to the said Vestry and if at that time, there be not a sufficient Vestry, It is Ordered yt ye Church Wardens be Impowered to agree w'th the said Workmen."

"At a Vestry held for St. Peter's parish on Saturday the 29th of Septr, 1722.

"Whereas the Church Wardens of this parish have begun to erect a Bellfry at the Church, It is ordered that 3 lbs. of Tobo. p poll be Levyed for the defraying the Charge thereof & that the said Tobo. do Lye in the hands of the Collector till the said Bellfry be finished if the Bell be hung Workmanlike.

"At a Vestry held at Mr. Taylor's, in St. Peter's Parieh, in New Kent County, on Monday the 19th of November, 1722.



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"Ordered that Mr. Thos. Pinchback and wardens are Impowered and dsired to come and view the Bellfry and to make a true and Just report of the Value of the whole work, and that Nxt Saturday be the appointed day & if they can not agree they are Impowered and desired to pitch upon a Third and that the Vestry do allow them for their Trouble and that neither Church Wardens nor Vestry are to have any Confernce with them."

"At a Vestry held for St. Peter's Parish October ths 6th, 1739.

"That 5 pounds of Tobo. be Lsveyed on Every Tithable Person of this Parish for Carrying on the building A Vestry Room & Steeple & other Repairs of the Church, & that it be sold for ready money to ths highest Bidders by the Collector."

"That a Vestry be appointed to bs held ths first Day of December next, in Order to Agres with a Workman towards building a Vestry Room & Steepls & making good other Deficiences of the Church, & that in the meantime the Clerk give what Public Notice he can for Workmen to come in to Agree with the Vsstry accordingly for the Same. D. Mossom, M'in'r; Jno. Dandridge, Thos. Butts, Jos. Marston, Chas. Massie, Walter Clopton, David Patteson, Rich'd Sherman, Rich'd Littlepage, Ambross Dudley, Church Wardens."

"At a Vsstry held for St. Peter's Parish, Septsmbsr the 29th, 1740.

"That the Sume of Twenty Pounds be paid to Mr. William M\*, Builder for Erecting \* Porch According to Agreeem't, & whits washing & other Repairs of the inside of the Church, & that the monsy bs p'd to him in 1742."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's Parish June the 3rd, 1742.

"Ordered that the Church Wardens agrees with some person to mend ths Church windows & to Provide a Rope and Chain for the Ball."

"At a vestry held for St. Peter's Parish, September the 29th, 1742.

"That Coll. Wm. Macon, Maj'r Joseph Foster, Coll. Custis & Maj'r Dandridge or any two of them agree with Mr. Edward Ruseell towards Repairing the Spire & Erecting Dormant windows for the Steeple."

"At a Vestry Met in the Vestry Room of St. Peter's Parish, and hld the 20th day of Nov'r, 1752.

"That Colo. William Macon do Pay Mr. John Street 10/10 for his Trouble in Surveying and Laying off an acre of Land given by Capt. William Taylor for ths Use of St. Peter's Church, and that

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he Pay Mr. Bartlot Anderson 10/10 for writing a Deed for the said Land."

In Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia, is an article, titled St. Peter's Church, St. Peter's Parish, New Kent County, Virginia, by Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, Ph.D., from which the following extract is taken:

"Under date of November 20, 1752, there is an entry in the vestry minutes in which the 'Brick Church' is referred to as 'St. Peter's Church.' So far as known to the writer this is the first time that the name of 'St. Peter's' was ever given to this church."

Additional Data: Opinion prevails among some historians that the marriage of George Washington and Martha Custis took place at St. Peter's Church on January 6, 1759.

At Talleyville, on Virginia Route No. 4, is an iron slab or highway marker bearing the following inscription: "Two miles northeast is St. Peter's Church, built in 1703 in English bond. David Massom, rector there for forty years, was the minister, who married George Washington. According to one tradition, the wedding took place at St. Peter's Church."

The following abstract appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sunday, July 15, 1934, and was written by Frank S. Hopkins:

"St. Peter's Church, which dates from 1703, was about three miles inland from the White House, and it was there that the Custises, Chamberlaynes, Littlepages and other families of the neighborhood attended services and heard the sermons of Parson Mossom. Martha Dandridge and Daniel Parke Custis were married there in 1749, when the former was 17 and the latter a bachelor of 37."

#### Bibliography:

St. Peter's Parish, New Kent County, Virginia, Vestry Book, 1685 - 1758. (Photostatic of the original manuscript Vestry Book.) Filed in the Archives Department of the Virginia State Library.

The Vestry Book of Saint Peter's, New Kent County, Virginia, 1682 - 1758. Published by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia. Parish Record Series, No. 3. William Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer, 1905, Richmond, Virginia.

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Colonial Churches in the Original Colony of Virginia. A Series of Sketches by Especially qualified writers, Richmond, Virginis. Southern Churchman Company, 1908.

Key to Inscription on Virginia Highway Historical Markers, issued by the Virginia State Commission on Conservation and Development.

Personal Interview with Dr. Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, St. Christopher's School, Westhampton, Virginia. Notes of Dr. Chamberlayne, taken from the manuscript Vestry Book and Register of St. Peter's Parish, New Kent and James City Counties, Virginia, 1685 - 1758, which is filed in Virginia Theological Seminary at Alexandria.

Richmond Times-Dispatch, Sunday, July 15, 1934.

Virginia Thompson  
Historian

Approved: December 17, 1936

Eugene Bradbury  
MAJOR EUGENE BRADBURY, A. I. A.  
District Officer  
District of Virginis

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Rev. Feb. 5 '37

Thos. T. Watkinson